



FireStorm Training

Review into the Emergency Service Levey (ESL)

I would like to contribute my input into the ESL review.

The current system allows an organisation with self-interests to control hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars that has resulted in building a megalithic bureaucracy while taking a one size fits all approach to the provision of emergency services to the public that has clearly let down rural and peri-urban communities and volunteer organisations.

Recently I was in communication with Mr Craig Waters Chief Superintendent Professional Development, Capability Command, Department of Fire and Emergency Services Western Australia, Fire and Emergency Services Academy (Email chain attached) where I enquired about providing Nationally Accredited fire training to volunteers for local governments, after enquiring with his superiors I was advised that only DFES pathways courses could be claimed and that DFES would not recognise the National units as they were not on the pathways system, and that local governments were free to use external Nationally Accredited training services but could not get them funded under the ESL.

This is cartel conduct and is anticompetition, this goes against the state and federal policies to do with monopolies and cartels, even government ones.

As local governments are responsible for the creation, equipping and training of volunteer bushfire brigades DFES is only a service provider and should not be in the situation where it can dictate that only its services may be purchased. This could also fall within the third line forcing restrictions of franchise law.

Although DFES is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and is required under that registration to recognise Nationally Accredited qualifications, and they have a policy that states they do, the policy exists only to maintain compliance with the registration requirements of an RTO and is clearly not actually intended for use. DFES also state that they can issue the national units if requested to do so, this is false as the requirement to issue national units requires that the course be Nationally Accredited and delivered and assessed

by a trainer/ assessor that holds a minimum qualification of TAE40110 Certificate IV in training and assessment, DFES has set up a training system where courses are delivered and assessed by non-qualified individuals, should DFES try and issue said qualifications it would likely end in DFES being deregistered as an RTO.

In speaking to several other volunteer bush firefighters, it was made clear to me that although the volunteers give their time freely the DFES qualifications have no value outside the DFES system. When relocating out of Western Australia or trying to gain employment in their daily lives if a volunteer puts on their resume the qualifications awarded by DFES, no matter how high those qualifications are and no matter the experience level of the volunteer, they are disregarded. Employers and volunteer organisations want to see the units of Nationally Accredited competency gained.

By taking the ESL and placing it under the administration of the Department of Treasury it removes it from self-serving actions of any individual organisations and insulates it from changes in political agenda.

This would also encourage competition while ensuring that training of volunteers was up to national standards and therefore portable.

As an RTO DFES would be free to compete with private companies to supply training services to local governments for their volunteers. This would deliver savings to ratepayers and a more efficient targeted approach to training volunteers, while showing volunteers their service to the community is valued by awarding them Nationally Accredited qualifications.

Any idea that people will take advantage of getting ratepayer funded qualifications is ridiculous as it takes a significant amount of time and service to the community to comply with the performance criteria to be awarded these qualifications, but would aid in the retention of volunteers.

I believe that distributing the ESL through Treasury could be a simple process where it is distributed in a lump sum using a predetermined formula that is assessed using the existing scale as to how the ESL is currently collected. This would deliver most of the ESL to DFES in Cities and most to local communities where DFES provides little service, while allowing a budget for new facilities to be maintained.

Correct regulation would make sure that local governments use the ESL correctly to upgrade and maintain firefighting assets, deliver Nationally Accredited training to volunteers and develop mitigation processes, with any unused funds being returned to treasury, taking pressure off constantly increasing ESL payments by the ratepayer.

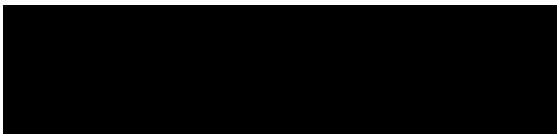
Brigades do NOT need equipment that will probably get them out of trouble if fire conditions change. They need equipment that WILL get them out of trouble if fire conditions change!!

With local governments controlling the use of the ESL it makes it possible to ensure that brigades get equipment that is designed to suite local terrain and conditions instead of the current one size fits all system and promotes local business.

Local governments already have accounts people and emergency service coordinators/managers therefore there would be little or no additional administration costs and would alleviate the current waste of time and resources and delays in getting replacement PPE and equipment, delivering a more efficient system to the ratepayer at no additional cost.

A separate more streamlined DFES and Bushfire Service where the ESL was administered by Treasury would deliver more efficient use of the ESL while having no effect on the jobs and service provided by paid firefighters, the administration staff displaced by this could be reassigned to other departments and/or reduced by attrition.

Regards

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Brian Williamson
Managing Director

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10th March 2017